

Senator Handley and Representative Sayers-

Good morning. My name is Barry Bayly and I am the shop Chairman of Local 1645 UAW. I have recently lost my job of 33 years along with hundreds of my coworkers as a result of a plant closing of the Timken Company (formerly the Torrington Company). I have had the privilege of representing these workers for over twenty years through five contract negotiations and recently in bargaining the plant closing agreement. During all of these proceedings health care was always the predominant concern and the issue that drove all negotiations. The company was consistently looking to reduce benefits and increase cost sharing for our members. Preserving these benefits came only with significant costs in other areas of the overall benefit package but the membership reluctantly accepted these agreements because of the importance of preserving their family's medical coverage. In the long run, I'm certain that healthcare costs weighed heavily in the decision to close our plant costing our members the ultimate price of their own jobs.

The announcement of the plant closing was a very traumatic experience for all of us but it was significantly worse for those that would be losing their healthcare coverage. Being an older workforce, a large number of our members were fortunate to have union negotiated retirement medical benefits and for those workers the idea of losing the only job they ever knew was tempered by the thoughts of at least they would continue to have health insurance. For the other group of our members who were losing their medical coverage the experience was much, much worse. These workers knew that they would have to find jobs with medical benefits and that would be so much harder to do. Yes, there were COBRA benefits but that wasn't much consolation because the premiums for

family coverage even at group rates was over \$1400 per month, not very affordable for someone who was now unemployed. During the months between the closing announcement and the actual closing it became apparent that the group of our members that were losing their healthcare were suffering a major emotional price. The uncertain future coupled with the worries of a major illness without having insurance conjured thoughts and visions of families losing everything they had worked their whole lives for. Some of our members are still having a very hard time. This shouldn't be happening in one of the richest states in the richest country in the world. We can do better.

I believe there is a real problem with the healthcare system not only in our state but in the country, and it is a problem that needs to be fixed now. We need a universal healthcare system that is affordable, accessible and portable. In this constantly changing economy, with workers changing jobs every day we need to change the system to relieve the stress these workers endure. Being without a job is hard enough and being without health insurance too is sometimes unbearable. We need to revamp the healthcare system in this state to level the playing field for workers and their employers. I would like to thank Senator Williams for his work but respectfully, this bill does not go far enough. While helping this state's uninsured is nice and immediately necessary, the only way to begin to keep employers in the state is to make it more affordable for their employees to be insured. Passing a single payer health care system would allow for all employers in Connecticut to compete on a level playing field, and in fact, would lower many of the healthcare costs these employers are currently paying. I am asking that we pass legislation that will help all citizens in our state now and one that will be a model for our country in the future. Thank you all for your time.